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TO: Sen. Steve Cassano and Rep. Jason Rojas, Chairmen,
And the Members of the Planning and Development Committee
FROM: Rivers Alliance of Connecticut

RE: Public Hearing

DATE: February 20, 2013

Rivers Alliance of Connecticut is the statewide, non-profit coalition of river organizations, individuals, and businesses formed to protect and enhance Connecticut's waters by promoting sound water policies, uniting and strengthening the state's many river groups, and educating the public about the importance of water stewardship. Our 500 members include almost all of the state's river and watershed conservation groups, representing many thousand Connecticut residents.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on S.B. 814, AAC INTERVENTION IN PERMIT PROCEEDINGS PURSUANT TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT OF 1971.

We understand that the present language does not reflect the language now being offered by the proponents of the bill. Nevertheless, the underlying premise of the various versions of this legislation, discussed last year and this year, is that intervenors under the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) are by and large opportunistic, self-serving persons who misuse CEPA to foil development, whether or not there is a risk of environmental damage. **But CEPA has served the state well for more than forty years. It offers ordinary citizens who value the state's water, air, forests, and fertile soils a chance to step forward to argue against unreasonable impairment of these resources.** Those of us who have had the interesting fortune to serve on land-use commissions, or to report on commission meetings and hearings, will acknowledge that, in the hundreds of hearings each year, various participants sometimes act badly. But intervenors by no means corner this market. The playing field is not tipped in their favor. We, at Rivers Alliance, want to be reasonable and to seek common ground, but we strongly object to limiting the longstanding rights of residents under CEPA. Look around. Are we really overprotecting the state's natural resources? Do we need to rein in those zealots who make a scene about protecting clean water, grasslands, and fresh air? Do we have too much of these things? No, we do not. We need CEPA to move forward with the effort to preserve these vital resources for the state's future.

Margaret Miner, Executive Director